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ABSTRACT

This study investigated attitudes concerning inclusive education among teachers and building administrators (principals and vice principals) in Ohio. Sixteen grants were awarded to educators in 28 public schools to support their efforts in conceptualizing and implementing inclusive education. Inclusive education was defined as any educational situation in which both students with disabilities and students without disabilities are educated within the same classroom or environment. Building administrators and teachers involved in the grant projects agreed, as a condition of the award, to complete a survey questionnaire, first in the spring of 1994 and then again during the spring of 1995. Findings from the surveys indicated that building administrators and teachers perceived the 10 principles of inclusion addressed in the survey to be critically important and that they believed themselves to be functioning well in relation to these principles, with no significant differences between 1994 and 1995 data. The 10 principles relate to responsibility for student learning regardless of that student's learning rate; communication with inclusive education stakeholders, parents, and colleagues; daily instructional functioning in inclusive settings; appropriate support for inclusive classrooms; an understanding of the inclusion process; and appropriate inservice to implement inclusion. (Data tables comprise half the document.) (ND)

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Inclusionary Skills and Practices of Inservice Principals and Teachers: Implications for Restructuring Teacher Preparation

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Celebrating Diversity:
Preparing Personnel for the 21st Century

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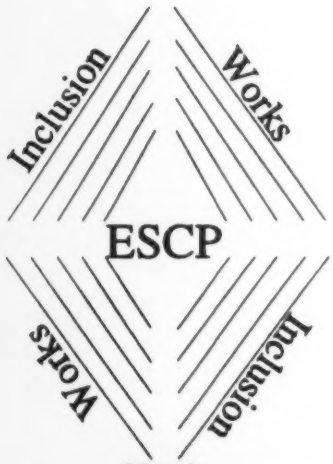

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INCLUSIONARY SKILLS AND PRACTICES OF INSERVICE PRINCIPALS AND TEACHERS: IMPLICATIONS FOR RESTRUCTURING TEACHER PREPARATION

INTRODUCTION

In 1993, the University of Dayton, Department of Teacher Education, received an Education Systems Change Project grant from the Ohio Developmental Disabilities Planning Council. The primary purpose of the grant was to support Ohio public and private schools as they struggled with the concept and the implementation of inclusive education. Thus far, fifty-five school projects have been funded. This includes eighty-one different buildings with children in preschool through grade twelve.

One part of the project has been to survey the teachers and principals, involved in the grants, about their perceptions of the knowledge and skills needed to be successful as inclusive educators. This information has been gathered through survey questionnaires. A second part of the project has been to use the information received from the field to determine the impact of inclusive education on the teacher preparation and administrative preparation programs. A university/college invitational conference was held to discuss the field based perceptions and the implications of those perceptions for training educational personnel.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The concept of inclusion, desegregating the schools on the basis of handicapping condition, has hit at the heart of education. What was considered "best practice" for both general education and special education is being questioned. To create and nurture an educational setting in which all children work, learn and play together, as inclusive education advocates, requires a rethinking of the purpose of education, a rethinking of the role of the generalist and the specialist and a rethinking of teaching/learning practices. If inclusion is to be successful, educators who are willing to test the waters need to share their experiences with others.

Teacher preparation programs must be vigilant of those practitioners who make up our field based laboratories and glean from them, or better with them, the experiences preservice educators need to be successful in inclusive education situations. As Schumm and Vaughn (1995) state, "We have learned that teachers' personal knowledge is necessary, but not sufficient. . . . However, we have learned that providing teachers with external knowledge (e.g., application of research) is [also] necessary, but not sufficient (p. 352). "

This study was designed to investigate the following questions:

1. What is the perceived level of importance for the following two groups concerning inclusive education?
   a. teachers
   b. building administrators
2. What is the perceived level of personal functioning for the following two groups concerning the principles of inclusive education?
   a. teachers

b. building administrators

3. What is the relationship between levels of perceived importance and perceived personal functioning for the following two groups:
   a. teachers
   b. building administrators
4. What are the differences between the following two groups in their perceived level of importance:
   a. teachers - 1994
   b. teachers - 1995
   c. building administrators - 1994
   d. building administrators - 1995
5. What are the differences between the following two groups in their perceived level of personal functioning:
   a. teachers - 1994
   b. teachers - 1995
   c. building administrators - 1994
   d. building administrators - 1995

METHODOLOGY

Population

In March 1994 sixteen grants were awarded to educators in twenty-eight schools in Ohio public schools. The grants were to support their efforts in conceptualizing and implementing inclusive education. For grant purposes, inclusive education was defined as: any educational situation in which both students with disabilities and students without disabilities are educated within the same classroom or environment. Building administrators (principals and vice principals) and teachers involved in the grant projects agreed, as a condition of the award, to complete a survey questionnaire. The surveys were distributed and returned first during the Spring of 1994 and again during the Spring of 1995. Tables 1, 2 and 3 describe both the 1994 and the 1995 respondents.

See TABLES 1, 2 and 3

Spring 1994 Data Base: All grant sites responded to the surveys. Twenty-six administrators responded: twenty-two principals (85%) and four vice principals (15%). One hundred eighty-three teacher surveys were returned: one hundred twenty-three general education teachers (67%) and sixty special education teachers (33%).

The administrator respondents were located in rural (12%), urban (19%), and suburban (69%) districts. They were in charge of buildings that housed kindergarten through twelfth grade students: Grades K-5 (68%), Grades 6-8 (16%) and Grades 9-12 (16%).

The general education teacher respondents taught students in grades K through 12: Grades K-5 (50%), Grades 6-8 (25%) and Grades 9-12 (25%). The special education teacher respondents taught students in grades K through 12, but with a

slightly different pattern: Grades K-5 (53%), Grades 6-8 (25%) and Grades 9-12 (22%).

The special education students (Table 3) who were included in the programs were identified as students with specific learning disabilities (37%); mild mental retardation (25%); multiple handicaps (15%); sensorial, hearing or visual, disabilities (11%); physical disabilities (6%); and severe behavior problems (6%).

Spring 1995 Data Base: Thirteen of the sixteen grant sites (81%) responded to the surveys. Twenty-five administrator surveys were returned: twenty-one principals (84%) and 4 vice principals (16%). Ninety four teacher surveys were returned: sixty-four general education teachers (68%) and thirty special education teachers (32%).

The administrator respondents were located in rural (16%), urban (8%), and suburban (76%) districts. They were in charge of buildings that housed kindergarten through twelfth grade students: Grades K-5 (84%), Grades 6-8 (10%) and Grades 9-12 (1%).

The general education teacher respondents taught students in grades K through 12: Grades K-5 (62%), Grades 6-8 (32%) and Grades 9-12 (6%). The special education teacher respondents taught students in grades K through 12, but with a slightly different pattern: Grades K-5 (61%), Grades 6-8 (28%) and Grades 9-12 (11%).

The special education students (Table 3) who were included in the programs were identified as students with specific learning disabilities (33%); mild mental retardation (25%); multiple handicaps (15%); sensorial, hearing or visual, disabilities (12%); physical disabilities (9%); and severe behavior problems (6%).

Sample

In 1994 and 1995 there were three hundred thirty-five teachers (general educators and special educators) and thirty-eight building administrators (principals and vice principals) involved in the inclusive education grants. One hundred eighty-three teachers (55%) and twenty-four building administrators (63%) were used to describe the population of the grantees.

See TABLE 4

Table 4 illustrates the two groups and the number of respondents in each category.

Design

The design for the study was a combination of descriptive survey and correlation research.

Data and Instrumentation

The instrument for collecting data from the building administrators and teachers was developed by the grant staff, the grant steering committee and an administrative faculty consultant. Both the administrator and teacher survey questionaires consisted of the same ten principles of inclusions. The ten principles of inclusion were responded to individually on two dimensions. First the respondents were to rate the

level of importance of each principle and secondly, rate his or her personal functioning related to each principle.

See TABLES 5 and 6

Part I, a perceived level of importance, was obtained by calculating a summated score for 10 items with 1 = not important, 2 = of little importance, 3 = of moderate importance, 4 = of critical importance. Part II, a personal functioning score, was obtained by calculating a summated score for 10 items with 1 = I do not exhibit this behavior, 2 = I exhibit this behavior at an acceptable level, 3 = I exhibit this behavior exceptionally well.

The content validity of the instrument was established by a jury of experts from the Teacher Education Department, the Educational Administrative Department of the University of Dayton and the grant's Steering Committee.

Using Chrombach Alpha, the following reliability coefficients were established: Part I, perceived level of importance, 10 items, Chrombach Alpha = 0.73 Part II, personal functioning, 10 items, Chrombach Alpha = 0.61.

Analysis

Data was transferred from the questionnaires to a disk and analyzed using the facilities of the Instruction and Research Computer Center at the University of Dayton. The computer program used was the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences.

Descriptive statistics were used to summarize the data pertaining to the perceived levels of importance and personal functioning. The Pearson product moment correlation coefficient was used to describe the relationship between the variables, importance and personal functioning. T-tests were used to describe the difference between teachers and building administrators.

FINDINGS

See TABLE 7

Table 7 illustrates how important building administrators perceived the principles of inclusive education. In both years (1994 and 1995), the mean scores 38.52 and 37.65 respectively, indicate the principles of inclusive education to be critically important.

See TABLE 8

Table 8 indicates that ninety-three percent of the building administrators perceive themselves as performing exceptionally well concerning the principles of inclusive education. The remaining 7 percent felt they were doing an acceptable job when the principles of inclusive education were presented to them. In 1994 and 1995 administrators' mean scores 1994 = 22.9 and 1995 = 23.0 indicate they perceive themselves as performing in the exceptional range.

See TABLES 9 and 10

Tables 9 and 10 indicate no significant differences between the years 1994 and 1995 for building administrators when a t-test was performed on levels of importance and personal functioning.

See TABLE 11

Table 11 presents the data regarding the teachers perceived level of importance in 1994 and 1995. Teachers in both years perceived the principles of inclusive education to be in the critically important range (1994 Mean = 36.99, 1995 Mean = 36.64).

See TABLE 12

Table 12 indicates that teachers, as a total, in both years perceived their personal functioning level to be in the exceptional level of functioning 82%. The remaining 18% perceived themselves to be in the acceptable level of performance. Mean scores for both years (1994 Mean = 22.50, 1995 Mean = 22.97) indicate teachers as a whole perceived themselves as exceptional when performing the principles of inclusive education.

See TABLES 13 and 14

By computing a t-test to show the difference between the years of 1994 and 1995 for teachers' perceived level of importance (Table 13) and personal functioning (Table 14), no significant differences were found.

See TABLE 15

Table 15 indicates a nonsignificant relationship between level of importance and personal functioning for building administrators.

See TABLE 16

The Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient was used to describe the relationship between the variables: level of importance and personal functioning. Table 16 reveals that teachers' perceived level of importance was significantly related to their perceived level of personal functioning. This relationship, based upon 212 respondents, was positive, although low ($r \doteq .28$)

Summary of Findings

Level of Importance: Building administrators and teachers perceive the principles of inclusion to be critically important. When the difference between years 1994 and 1995 was examined, there was no significant differences found for either administrators or teachers.

Level of Personal Functioning: Both building administrators and teachers perceive themselves as functioning in the exceptional range when considering their

behavior related to the ten principles of inclusion. When examined over a one year period (Spring 1994 to Spring 1995), the perceived personal functioning of the administrators and the teachers did not significantly differ over the year.

Correlations: A Pearson product moment correlation was calculated for the two variables, importance and personal functioning. Administrators demonstrated no correlation. This may be explained in part by the small sample size and/or by the difference in the scales, using a 4 point scale for importance and a 3 point scale for personal functioning. This may, also, be due to the relative unchanged rank order of the importance ratings and the variable rank order ratings of the personal functioning ratings (Table 5). When teacher responses were examined, a low positive relationship was found between importance and personal functioning.

Discussion

The administrators and teachers in this sample of educators engaged in inclusive education percieve the ten principles of inclusion addressed on the survey as critically important. These same administrators and teachers percieve themselves as functioning in an exceptional or an acceptable manner in relation to these ten principles.

The ten elements, listed on Tables 5 and 6, relate to responsibility for student learning regardless of that student's learning rate (item 2), communication with inclusive education stakeholders, parents and colleagues (items 3, 4, 5 and 6), daily instructional functioning in inclusive settings (item 9), appropriate support for inclusive classrooms (item10), an understanding of the inclusive process (item 8) and appropriate inservice to implement inclusion (items 1 and 7).

Administrators: The rank order of the importance rating of the ten principles of inclusion by the building administrators remained realitively the same. The top two items, communicating effectively with teachers (item 3) and being committed to the growth/learning of ALL students, irrespective of their learning rates (item 2), were rated first and second on both importance and personal functioning, in 1995 and second and first, respectively, in 1994, on both variables: importance and personal functioning. The administrators were consistent, both 1994 and 1995, in rating the importance of item 9, agreeing on who teaches daily activities and on the long term outcomes of the inclusion program, as the lowest. They were, also, consistent, both 1994 and 1995, in their personal functioning rating (lowest) of item 10, being satisfied with the supports provided ALL students in inclusive programs.

These building administrators appear to be consistent in feeling that communicating with teachers and being committeed to ALL students are critically important elements of inclusive education and they appear to feel that they function exceptionally well in relation to these elements. The variability in their ratings of perceived personal functioning may indicate the variability of demands made upon them as the inclusive education program in their building evolves.

Teachers: Of the ten elements listed in Table 6, teachers rated importance items 2, 7 and 8 the highest and item 9, the lowest in both 1994 and 1995. Item 2 was, also, ranked highest in personal functioning both times while item 10 was ranked lowest, both times, for personal functioning. These teachers appear to believe that ALL students, irrespective of their individual learning rates, are their responsibility and they

feel that they function exceptionally well in regard to their committment to this principle (item 2). They further believe that it is critically important to be informed about inclusion (item 8) and to receive appropriate inservice for implementing inclusion (item 7). Their personal functioning ratings with regard to these two items, however, indicate an adequate level, but below the mean.

There appears to be a degree of discomfort with conceptualizing and implementing inclusive education on the part of these teachers. This discomfort could be explained in part by the low personal functioning rating given item 10, satisfaction with supports provided ALL students in inclusive programs. This discomfort could, also, be explained partly by the relative lack of importance, lowest rating both years, placed on item 9, related to daily teaching responsibilities. Personal functioning on item 9 was, also, rated well below the mean.

IMPLICATIONS

The findings of this study are limited to Ohio and to the self perceptions of respondents awarded Education Systems Change Grants to further their inclusive education efforts. These grantees were actively involved in implementing inclusive education and as such may have greater insight to the training needs of building administrators and teachers.

Administrative Preparation Programs: Building administrators seem to need an opportunity to explore the concept of inclusion and the supports needed for inclusive education. They need to value ALL learners irrespective of their learning rate. They appear to need leadership skills to traverse the political waters and effect change based on the education of individuals. They appear to need strategies for communicating with parents about inclusive education. Many of these may be accomplished through a variety of field experiences in inclusive and diverse settings. The concept of inclusion, with all of its ramifications, must be examined as the building administrator forms a philosophy of educational leadership.

Teacher Preparation Programs: General educators and special educators are indicating that graduates of teacher education programs need to be prepared to teach ALL students. They need to have an understanding of the concept of inclusion and of the dynamics of inclusion. These needs may be met by training programs that model such skills as collaboration and problem solving. These needs may be met by forming partnerships with diverse field-based sites for collaborative research, preservice training experiences, and inclusive practices. Teachers, whatever their academic major or speciality, need to be given the charge that they are responsibile for the education of ALL children.

Reference

Schumm, J. S., and Vaughn, S. (1995). Meaningful professional development in accommodating students with disabilities: Lessons learned. Remedial and Special Education, 16(6), 344-353.

TABLE 1
BUILDING ADMINISTRAOR RESPONDENTS 1994 AND 1995

	1994		1995			1994		1995			1994		1995	
Administrators	N	%	N	%	Grades	N	%	N	%	Location	N	%	N	%
Principals	22	85%	21	84%	K - 5	93	68%	109	84%	Rural	3	12%	4	16%
Vice Principals	4	15%	4	16%	6 - 8	22	16%	13	10%	Urban	5	19%	2	8%
					9 -12	21	16%	8	6%	Suburban	18	69%	19	76%
Totals =	26		25			136		130			26		25	

TABLE 2
TEACHER RESPONDENTS 1994 AND 1995

	General Educators				Special Educators			
	1994		1995		1994		1995	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
	123	67%	64	68%	60	33%	30	32%
Grades Taught								
K - 5	84	50%	44	62%	84	53%	45	61%
6 - 8	43	25%	23	32%	40	25%	21	28%
9 - 12	43	25%	4	6%	36	22%	8	11%

TABLE 3
SPECIAL EDUCATION STUDENT CATEGORIES 1994 AND 1995

Categories	1994		1995	
	N	%	N	%
Specific Learning Disabilities	114	37%	69	33%
Mild Mental Retardation	77	25%	53	25%
Multihandicapped	46	15%	30	15%
Sensorial Disability	36	11%	24	12%
Physical Disability	18	6%	19	9%
Severe Behavior Handicap	18	6%	13	6%
Totals =	309	100%	208	100%

TABLE 5
BUILDING ADMINISTRATORS RESPONSES TO THE TEN PRINCIPLES OF INCLUSIONS ON THE DIMENSIONS OF IMPORTANCE AND PERSONAL FUNCTIONING

Principals	1995 Means Impt.	1995 Means PF	1994 Means Impt	1994 Means PF
3. communicate effectively with teachers.	4.0	2.67	3.96	2.54
2. are committed to the growth/learning of ALL students, irrespective of their learning rates.	3.96	2.68	4.0	2.69
1. are responsive to program change efforts.	3.88	2.29	3.92	2.46
7. are given the appropriate inservice essential for implementing inclusion.	3.88	2.13	3.92	2.15
8. are well informed about the process of inclusion.	3.88	2.46	3.85	2.24
6. view themselves as a partner with parents in the educational process.	3.80	2.61	3.88	2.46
10. are satisfied with the supports provided ALL students in inclusive programs.	3.70	2.0	3.83	1.92
4. communicate effectively with parents of the children with disabilities in inclusive classrooms.	3.60	2.13	3.73	2.19
5. communicate effectively with parents of the children without disabilities in inclusive classrooms.	3.48	2.17	3.73	2.12
9. agree on who teaches daily activities and on the long term outcomes of the inclusion program.	3.44	2.17	3.63	2.08
Group Means	37.65	23.0	38.52	22.91

TABLE 6
TEACHERS RESPONSES TO THE TEN PRINCIPLES OF INCLUSIONS ON THE DIMENSIONS OF IMPORTANCE AND PERSONAL FUNCTIONING

Teachers	1995 Means Impt.	1995 Means PF	1994 Means Impt	1994 Means PF
2. are committed to the growth/learning of all students, irrespective of their learning rates.	3.94	2.69	3.93	2.66
7. are given the appropriate inservice essential for implementing inclusion.	3.77	2.06	3.82	2.03
8. are well informed about the process of inclusion.	3.76	2.20	3.81	2.08
4. communicate effectively with parents of the children with disabilities in inclusive classrooms.	3.72	2.33	3.73	2.26
6. view themselves as partners with parents in the educational process.	3.70	2.45	3.66	2.39
1. are responsive to program change efforts.	3.69	2.45	3.77	2.57
10. are satisfied with the supports provided ALL students in inclusive programs.	3.69	2.0	3.64	1.96
5. communicate effectively with parents of the children without disabilities in inclusive classrooms.	3.61	2.20	3.57	2.10
3. communicate effectively with the principal.	3.55	2.44	3.64	2.43
9. agree on who teaches the daily activities and on the long term outcomes of the inclusive program.	3.16	2.03	3.31	2.07
Group Means	36.64	22.97	36.99	22.50

TABLE 7
BUILDING ADMINISTRATORS' PERCEIVED LEVEL OF IMPORTANCE CONCERNING THE PRINCIPLES OF INCLUSION

Score		1994 Administrators		1995 Administrators		Total	
		N	%	N	%	N	%
31 - 40	Critical	23	100	23	100	23	100
21 - 30.99	Moderate	0	0	0	0		
11 - 20.99	Little	0	0	0	0		
0 - 10.99	Not	0	0	0	0		
Total		23	100	23	100	23	100

1994 Administrators' Mean = 38.52 1995 Administrators' Mean = 37.65

TABLE 8
BUILDING ADMINISTRATORS' PERCEIVED LEVEL OF PERSONAL FUNCTIONING CONCERNING THE PRINCIPLES OF INCLUSION

Score		1994 Administrators		1995 Administrators		Total	
		N	%	N	%	N	%
21 - 30	Exceptional	21	91	17	94	38	93
11 - 20.99	Acceptable	2	9	1	6	3	7
0 - 10.99	Did Not Exhibit	0	0	0	0		
	Total	23	100	18	100	41	100

1994 Administrators' Mean = 22.91 1995 Administrators' Mean = 23.00

TABLE 4
TEACHERS AND BUILDING ADMINISTRATORS

Position	Number of Participants	Respondents N	Respondents %
Teachers	335	183	55%
Administrators	038	024	63%
TOTAL	373	207	55%

TABLE 9
IMPORTANCE SCORES FOR BUILDING ADMINISTRATORS IN 1994 AND 1995

t-value	df	probability	significance
1.54	44	0.13	NS

1994 Administrators' Mean = 38.52 1995 Administrator Mean = 37.65

TABLE 10
PERSONAL FUNCTIONING SCORES FOR BUILDING ADMINISTRATORS
IN 1994 AND 1995

t-value	df	probability	significance
-0.14	39	0.89	NS

1994 Administrators' Mean = 22.91 1995 Administrators' Mean = 23.00

TABLE 11
TEACHERS' PERCEIVED LEVEL OF IMPORTANCE
CONCERNING THE PRINCIPLES OF INCLUSION

Score		1994 Teachers		1995 Teachers		Total	
		N	%	N	%	N	%
31 - 40	Critical	142	97.9	86	99	228	98
21 - 30.99	Moderate	3	2.1	1	1	4	2
11 - 20.99	Little	0	0	0	0	-	
0 - 10.99	Not	0	0	0	0		
	Total	145	100	87	100	232	100

1994 Teachers' Mean = 36.99 1995 Teachers' Mean = 36.64

TABLE 12
TEACHER' PERCEIVED LEVEL OF PERSONAL FUNCTIONING
CONCERNING THE PRINCIPLES OF INCLUSION

Score		1994 Teachers		1995 Teachers		Total	
		N	%	N	%	N	%
21 - 30	Exceptional	110	79	63	86	173	82
11 - 20.99	Acceptable	29	21	10	14	39	18
0 - 10.99	Did Not Exhibit	0	0	0	0		
	Total	139	100	73	100	212	100

1994 Teachers' Mean = 22.50 1995 Teachers' Mean = 22.97

TABLE 13
IMPORTANCE SCORES FOR TEACHERS IN 1994 AND 1995

t-value	df	probability	significance
.95	230	0.34	NS

1994 Teachers' Mean = 36.99 1995 Teachers' Mean = 36.64

TABLE 14
PERSONAL FUNCTIONING SCORES FOR TEACHERS IN 1994 AND 1995

t-value	df	probability	significance
-1.24	210	0.22	NS

1994 Teachers' Mean = 22.50 1995 Teachers' Mean = 22.97

TABLE 15
CORRELATION FOR ADMINISTRATORS' PERCEIVED LEVEL
OF IMPORTANCE AND PERSONAL FUNCTIONING

	Functioning
Importance	.90 (NS)*

*p = .05

TABLE 16
CORRELATION FOR TEACHERS' PERCEIVED LEVEL
OF IMPORTANCE AND PERSONAL FUNCTIONING

	Functioning
Importance	.928*

*p < .001